

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/DECISION NOTICE

Rehabilitation of Panorama as a Visitor/Education Center

Shenandoah National Park
Page and Rappahannock Counties, Virginia

At Shenandoah National Park, Page and Rappahannock counties, Virginia, the National Park Service (NPS) has decided to rehabilitate and remodel the Panorama building, construct a 2,820 square foot, 2-story addition to the building, and install/upgrade approximately 3,000 feet of waterline in an existing utility corridor. This action is needed to increase visitor safety; provide safe working conditions; provide access to individuals with handicaps; improve visitor experience and increase visitor knowledge, appreciation, and enjoyment of park opportunities and resources; and increase the efficiency, reliability, and sustainability of park operations. Installing/upgrading the waterline is required to provide adequate water flow for fire suppression at the Panorama building. The NPS has addressed the Selected Alternative in the *Rehabilitation of Panorama as a Visitor/ Education Center Environmental Assessment* (EA; October 2004).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The concessionaire-owned Panorama building is located at the intersection of U.S. 211 and Skyline Drive. It originally functioned as a restaurant/gift shop/ concessionaire housing facility. During Franchise Fee negotiations in April 1998, the park concessionaire, ARAMARK Convention and Tourism Services, negotiated the transfer of the Panorama building to the NPS in lieu of Special Account contributions for 1995 and 1996. It was also agreed that ARAMARK could continue to operate the facility until the end of the contract (December 31, 2004). However, due to declining visitation and revenue losses in the food and beverage area, the concessionaire requested park approval to permanently close the dining room prior to the onset of the 2002 season. Only the retail portion of the building remained open through the 2004 operating season. In addition, the few old apartment units accessed directly from the building's exterior have not been used in approximately five years. The building is currently used as a gift shop and as law enforcement ranger offices (on the lower level).

The existing Panorama facility is currently owned and operated by ARAMARK. The NPS Northeast Regional Director signed an amendment to ARAMARK's contract on September 04, 2001, Amendment No. 2, Concessions Contract No. CC-SHEN001-85, ARAMARK Sports and Entertainment Services, transferring Panorama to the NPS. The NPS will take possession of the building on December 31, 2004.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The Selected Alternative is Alternative B. Under this alternative, the NPS will rehabilitate and remodel the existing 12,444-square-foot Panorama building and add a 2,820-square-foot 2-story building addition to the building. The proposed building changes will convert the existing concession-owned restaurant/gift shop/law enforcement staff offices into a year-round visitor/education center and work space for multiple work groups (visitor education, interpretation, law enforcement, fee collection, and backcountry/wilderness coordinator) and the Shenandoah National Park Association (SNPA) (sales, storage, and office space). As part of the proposed building addition, an approximately 900-square-foot

2-bay vehicle storage facility for the North District's search and rescue (SAR)/emergency medical service (EMS) vehicle and a wildland fire engine (WFE) and associated equipment will be constructed.

The upper floor of the building will contain the visitor/education center and book sales area, interpretive exhibits, and multi-purpose room for the orientation film/meeting space for school groups for use during inclement weather. Approximately 1,000 square feet of museum space will interpret the currently untold Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) story at Shenandoah National Park. Details regarding exhibit and orientation space are provided on page 28 of the EA. Offices and workspace will also be provided on the lower floor of the renovated building for interpretive and education staff, a fee management supervisor, the backcountry/wilderness coordinator, and law enforcement rangers. Office and book storage space for the SNPA and a multipurpose room for public programs and staff training with table workspace and audio/visual capabilities will also be provided on the lower level. The existing contact station in the upper (eastern) parking area that currently serves as the backcountry permitting station will be rehabilitated into a vending area and yard equipment storage area.

Alterations will include installation of an elevator from the restrooms on the lower level and a stairway addition to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. Work will include all necessary utilities, exterior repairs, and the installation of energy efficient windows. As part of this proposal, approximately 3,000 linear feet of existing 4-inch water line leading from the Panorama facility to an existing water supply reservoir located on higher ground will be replaced with 8-inch water line. This action will provide adequate water flow for fire suppression at the Panorama building. This project is needed because various mandates, including the Life Safety Code® (NFPA 101®), *NPS Management Policies 2001*, NPS Director's Order (DO)-58, *Structural Fire Management*, and DO-50B, *Occupational Safety and Health Program*, require fire suppression in buildings for the protection of employees and property (structures and equipment). A flow test was conducted on the existing main as part of the park-wide *Fire Protection and Security Study* in 2002. The test concluded that the existing water pressure was not adequate to support fire suppression at Panorama. As part of pipe installation, the existing corridor, which is not currently maintained, will be enlarged by approximately 10 feet by vegetative clearing, to provide a corridor with a maximum width of 20 feet for construction. Over the long-term, the maintained width of this corridor will be 12 feet (minimum) to 20 feet (maximum), depending on location. The proposed route of the new water line will follow the old 4-inch line trench where practical to reduce rock excavation associated with a new trench.

The new Panorama Visitor/Education Center will be operated year-round, and be a free facility. A complete description of the Selected Alternative is provided on pages 27 through 34 of the EA.

Mitigation Measures

As part of the Selected Alternative, the NPS will implement the following mitigation measures:

Natural Resources

- The NPS will require the construction contractor to comply with the *Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law, Regulations, and Certification Regulations*, VESCL&R Minimum Standards, *General Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit Regulation for Discharges of Storm Water from Construction Activities*, and the guidance provided in the *Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook* to avoid and minimize erosion and sediment runoff during construction.
- Construction will not be conducted when soils are saturated, such as during or immediately following rain events, to minimize or eliminate the potential for compaction.
- The proposed route of the new water line will follow the old 4-inch line trench where practical to reduce potential rock excavation associated with a new trench.

- Construction equipment and vehicle servicing (oil and hydraulic fluid changes, etc.) will be conducted on paved surfaces and minor spill clean-up supplies and materials will be kept on-site for first response.
- The NPS will require the contractor to be prepared to respond to minor spill situations that may occur during construction.
- Disturbed areas will be revegetated with landscape materials immediately adjacent to the building or natural seed mixes at more distant locations.

Visitor Use & Experience/Recreation

- The NPS will continue to allow visitors to use the Appalachian Trail/Mary's Rock access point adjacent to the Panorama facility during construction through the provision of a pathway along the stone retaining wall behind the Panorama building. The NPS will require the construction contractor to erect orange fencing around the equipment staging area (western parking area), separating exposed equipment from this pathway to the Trail access point.
- To protect the extensive area of special flagstone walk adjacent to the south side of the Panorama building during construction, the new water line route will deviate from the existing alignment as necessary to bypass this area.

Socioeconomic Environment

- The NPS will require the construction contractor to install and maintain all required signage per the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* around the construction site and along nearby roads.
- The NPS will require the contractor to ensure that no trenches are left exposed overnight; excavated trenches would be refilled by close of work for the day.
- The NPS will require the construction contractor to install and maintain barricades or fences around the construction site to prevent non-contractors and the public from entering the construction area.
- The NPS will require the construction contractor to follow NPS construction contract standards during construction.
- The NPS will require the contractor to post construction warning signs to notify employees and the public of the construction site and dangers at the site.
- All fuel and other hazardous materials handling and storage will be restricted to the paved staging area (parking area at Panorama) and minor spill clean-up supplies and materials will be kept on-site for first response. In the event of an accidental spill, the NPS will require the construction contractor to contact the park Dispatch Office, and to respond to minor spill situations. In the event of a major spill, the Dispatch Office will contact hazardous material cleanup contractors. All fuel or chemical spills will be required to be contained and cleaned up in accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

Additional Protective Measures

- No construction will occur within the stream on the project site, and no equipment will need to enter the drainage.
- The NPS will require the construction contractor to powerwash all construction vehicles and equipment prior to their initial arrival at the park to remove seed and plant material.
- Efforts will be made to assure that any fill material that is imported to the site be free of exotic plants and seeds.
- The NPS will require the project area to be surveyed by an NPS biologist prior to the onset of construction for the presence of listed/rare species.
- The NPS will provide construction workers with a photograph of the Shenandoah salamander and instruct workers to stop all work if a Shenandoah salamander is encountered at the site, and notify the NPS immediately.

- Construction activities will be conducted outside the footprint of the hemlock stand located east of the upper parking lot at the Panorama facility and no disturbance to this stand will be permitted. The NPS will monitor the stand to ensure construction activities are not having an adverse impact on the hemlock stand.
- To reduce construction equipment emissions, the park will require that construction workers apply appropriate mitigating measures limiting idling of construction vehicles.
- Ground disturbance will be coupled with water sprinkling to reduce dust.
- Construction noise will be mitigated through the use of state-of-the-art noise reduction technology on construction equipment to the maximum extent possible to minimize the amount of noise from construction activities and by maintaining daylight work hours.
- Any lighting, such as security lighting, will be directional and shielded to prevent intrusions into the night sky.
- Construction vehicles will largely be restricted from using Skyline Drive to access the construction site.
- Impacts on the highway surface during installation of the new water main will be avoided through boring and jacking.
- When construction activities are occurring adjacent to the roadway during replacement of the water line, the lane adjacent to the construction zone will be closed to traffic, and traffic will be diverted around the construction zone into the one free lane with the use of flaggers.
- The NPS will maintain the section of the water line corridor from U.S. 211 to the administrative road at 12 feet to reduce adverse impacts on Skyline Drive's cultural landscape. Where the corridor crosses Skyline Drive, the NPS will allow vegetation to grow in the corridor to reduce impacts on the landscape.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The No Action alternative provides a basis for comparing the environmental consequences of the Selected Alternative. Should the No Action alternative be selected, the NPS would respond to future needs and the conditions associated with NHS administration without major actions or changes in the present course. Under this alternative, the Panorama facility would not be rehabilitated or remodeled as a visitor/education center, and the water transmission pipeline leading to the facility would not be replaced. The existing infrastructure would remain in place, and would continue to be in non-compliance with the ADA, Life Safety Code® (NFPA 101®), and other regulations to protect safety and property. There are no improvements to Panorama's infrastructure scheduled for the foreseeable future.

The Park would still take possession of the Panorama facility from ARAMARK on December 31, 2004. While the facility would no longer be used as a gift shop once ARAMARK vacates, staff office space would still be provided in the facility. The NPS law enforcement ranger staff would continue to work out of their current office space within the building, and the remainder of the building would be closed to the public. SAR/EMS vehicles and firefighting and emergency response equipment would continue to be stored at Piney River, approximately 11 miles north of Panorama, and the WFE would continue to be stored in the Headquarters Area, approximately 4 miles from Panorama and outside the park. This separation of equipment and personnel would continue to result in higher response times of personnel to emergency situations and inefficient park operations.

In addition, no new exhibit space would be provided in the Panorama building to display certain artifacts in the park's museum collections, such as those relating to the CCC, whose role in developing the park is a largely untold story.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative is determined by applying criteria identified in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to each alternative considered. In accordance with NEPA, the Environmentally Preferred elected Alternative would best: (1) fulfill the responsibility of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all generations a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The Selected Alternative, Alternative B, will best meet the provisions of the goals stated in Section 101 of NEPA because:

- It contributes a greater degree to meeting goal #1 than the No Action alternative (contributes substantially to meeting goal #1). While the park is currently meeting its trustee responsibilities, and would continue to meet these responsibilities under the Selected Alternative, this alternative would provide the additional benefits to succeeding generations of having a year-round visitor education center available at the park and of providing the opportunity to tell and interpret the currently untold story of the park's CCC heritage.
- It would assure a safe and productive environment for workers and visitors and would attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to human health and safety, or other undesirable consequences (contributes substantially to meeting goals #2 and #3). While natural and cultural resources would be negligibly impacted under the Selected Alternative, emergency vehicle and staff response times to accidents and wildland fires would be greatly reduced from current response times, and the effectiveness of law enforcement and emergency response staff increased, resulting in a long-term, moderate, beneficial impact on human health and safety at the park. In addition, the Selected Alternative is in compliance with the Life Safety Code® (NFPA 101®), NPS *Management Policies 2001*, DO-58, *Structural Fire Management*, and NPS Reference Manual #50B and DO-50B, *Occupational Safety and Health Program*, for the protection of employees and property (structures and equipment). Providing adequate fire infrastructure in the Panorama building would result in long-term, minor to moderate, localized, beneficial impacts on employee safety.
- It attains the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation by providing additional visitor experiences at the park while reusing existing infrastructure rather than new construction (contributes substantially to meeting goal # 3).
- It provides for an environment that supports greater diversity and a variety of individual choice than the No Action alternative, while only negligibly affecting cultural and natural resources (contributes substantially to meeting goal #4). While the Selected Alternative would affect the cultural landscape along Skyline Drive, this impact would be mitigated to preserve the landscape over the long-term. The Selected Alternative would provide visitors with an enhanced view of the park's historic and cultural heritage by allowing for the interpretation of its CCC heritage, which is a story currently untold at the park. In addition, while existing conditions provide a diversity and variety of individual choice in terms of visitor experience at the park, under the Selected Alternative, additional visitor informational and interpretive services would be provided at a central location within the park, and visitor experience could occur year-round (not just limited to seasonal use, as it is currently).

- While the park currently allows for a good balance between population and resource use, the Selected Alternative B would enhance this balance and the sharing of life's amenities through the provision of year-round (not just seasonal) visitor experience and the potential for the creation of a new CCC museum (contributes substantially to meeting goal #5).

Although the No Action alternative would result in no new impacts to the biological and physical environment, it would not attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment within the park because:

- It does not contribute as much to meeting goal #1 as the Selected Alternative (contributes somewhat to meeting goal #1). While the park is currently meeting its trustee responsibilities, and would continue to meet these responsibilities under the No Action alternative, this alternative does not provide the additional benefits to succeeding generations of having a year-round visitor education center available at the park or of providing the opportunity to tell and interpret the currently untold story of the park's CCC heritage.
- While the No Action alternative would not impact natural or cultural resources, visitor and worker safety would continue to be at risk under this alternative (alternative interferes somewhat with achieving goals #2 and #3). Due to the physical separation between workers and response vehicles, law enforcement ranger services would continue to be inefficient and emergency response times too high in the event of accidents or fires. This would pose a continued risk visitor safety, resulting in a long-term, moderate, adverse impact on human health and safety park-wide, and would be considered an undesirable and unintended consequence of the No Action alternative. In addition, existing fire suppression infrastructure in the Panorama building would continue to be inadequate for fire suppression and would continue to be in violation of the Life Safety Code® (NFPA 101®), NPS *Management Policies 2001*, DO-58, *Structural Fire Management*, and Reference Manual #50B and DO-50B, *Occupational Safety and Health Program*. The No Action alternative is not in compliance with NPS policies for protecting the safety and health of its employees, contractors, volunteers, and partnerships. This would result in a continued, long-term, localized, minor to moderate, adverse impact on employee safety.
- It does not contribute as much to meeting goal #4 as the Selected Alternative (contributes somewhat to meeting goal #4). While the No Action alternative would not adversely affect historic, cultural, or natural resources, this alternative would not allow for the opportunity to tell and interpret the currently untold story of the park's CCC heritage. In addition, while existing conditions provide a diversity and variety of individual choice in terms of visitor experience at the park, under the No Action alternative, many of these experiences would continue to be limited to seasonal use.
- The park currently allows for a good balance between population and resource use; visitor demand does not exceed supply (contributes somewhat to meeting goal #5). The No Action alternative would not change this balance.

WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Consideration of effects described in the EA and a finding that they are not significant is a necessary and critical part of this FONSI as required by 40 CFR 1508.13. Significance criteria are defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 to consider direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts and the context and intensity of impacts. Mitigation measures described in the EA and above and incorporated into the Selected Alternative are generally required by laws, regulations, or NPS policies and are adopted by this decision.

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

The Selected Alternative will have no impacts on prime or unique farmland, wetlands, floodplains, trout streams, species of special concern (including threatened, endangered, candidate, and rare species), archaeological resources, historic structures, ethnographic resources, Indian Trust resources, night skies, land use, and environmental justice/protection of children. Only negligible to minor impacts on water resources, vegetation, wildlife, air quality, cultural landscapes, museum collections, economy and social conditions, noise/soundscapes, visual resources, waste management, and transportation are anticipated to result from the Selected Alternative.

The Selected Alternative will have temporary to short-term, negligible, localized adverse impacts on soils due to increased erosion, compaction, and runoff from the construction site. Long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts on soils will occur from vegetation removal along the water line corridor, and from construction of the building addition due to a permanent loss of a very small amount of soils and an increase in impervious surfaces. The Selected Alternative will contribute to short-term, adverse, negligible to minor, localized, and long-term, minor, localized, adverse cumulative impacts on soils.

Short-term, localized, negligible impacts on visitor use and experience/recreation will be expected during construction due to the presence of workers and equipment, noise generated from equipment and vehicles, and increased construction truck and traffic and associated delays. However, over the long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts on visitor use and experience/recreation will occur due to year-round operation of the new visitor/education center, the building's central location, benefits to visitor safety, and the provision of informational and interpretive services. Long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts to school groups will also likely occur due to the facility being open throughout the school year. Visitation in this region of the park will likely increase, particularly so during winter months. The Selected Alternative will contribute to long-term, park-wide, moderate, beneficial, cumulative impacts on visitor use and experience.

While there will be short-term, negligible, localized impacts on human health and safety during construction (with implementation of mitigation measures), there will be no effects on park operations from construction activities. Over the long-term, the Selected Alternative will have localized, negligible to minor, adverse impacts from operation and maintenance costs of the new building. Long-term, localized, negligible to minor, beneficial impacts on park operations will be expected from the creation of employment at Panorama and from the increase in payments to NPS from SNPA operations at Panorama. Panorama and its associated infrastructure will become in compliance with the ADA and other required policies and laws over the long-term, resulting in localized, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on utilities, infrastructure, and human health and safety. In addition, long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts on park operations and human health and safety are anticipated due to decreased emergency response time, consolidation of park functions into a centrally located facility, and increased effectiveness of law enforcement and emergency response staff on the District. Alternative B will also have a long-term, minor to moderate, localized, beneficial impact on park operations from allowing housing units in the Headquarters Area to be converted back to their intended purpose.

Degree of effect on public health or safety:

Since NPS standard measures to protect workers and the public and additional mitigation measures cited above will be in place during construction, any impacts on human health and safety from construction will be short-term, negligible, and localized. Over the long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts on human health and safety are anticipated to result from the Selected Alternative due to decreased emergency response time, consolidation of park functions into a centrally located facility, and increased effectiveness of law enforcement and emergency response staff on the District. Relocating SAR/EMS and WFE

vehicles and equipment to Panorama will greatly decrease law enforcement ranger response time (by 15 to 30 minutes or more) to emergency incidents due to consolidation of staff and response equipment. These beneficial impacts will extend to the entire North District, since these emergency response services are District-wide.

In addition, Panorama and its associated infrastructure will become in compliance with the ADA and other required policies and laws under the Selected Alternative, resulting in localized, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on human health and safety. Long-term, moderate, localized, beneficial impacts on human health and safety will result from replacement of the water line serving the Panorama facility. The improvements to the water transmission infrastructure under Alternative B will be in compliance with the Life Safety Code® (NFPA 101®), NPS *Management Policies 2001*, DO-58, *Structural Fire Management*, and NPS Reference Manual #50B and DO-50B, *Occupational Safety and Health Program*, for the protection of employees and property (structures and equipment). The Selected Alternative will work towards removing existing safety hazards identified at Panorama, providing a safe and healthful place of employment and visitation, and removing the potential for loss of life and property in the event of a fire.

Degree of effect on unique characteristics of the potentially affected area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

Prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands (as defined under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act), and ecologically critical areas are not present in the area of construction and will not be affected by the Selected Alternative.

As described on pages 18 through 21 of the EA and in detail below, no cultural or historic resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be adversely affected by the Selected Alternative. There are no ethnographic resources or traditionally associated tribes within the project area. In addition, there are no Indian trust resources in, near, or associated with the project area, and the lands comprising the park are not held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior for the benefit of Indians due to their status as Indians.

No museum collections are currently stored at the Panorama facility, and none have the potential to be impacted during construction at the facility. After rehabilitation of the Panorama facility is completed, relevant museum objects would be moved from storage in the Park Headquarters Area to the Harpers Ferry Conservation Center for the fabrication of exhibits. While there is a very small risk that these museum objects could be damaged or otherwise adversely affected during transport, the risk is negligible because the packing of certain museum artifacts in the park's collections to be moved from storage at the park headquarters to exhibit in the rehabilitated Panorama Visitor/Education Center will be done very professionally, and thus, adequately to protect the artifacts in transit. In addition, the CCC museum within the rehabilitated Panorama facility would meet all NPS museum management standards. Although museum objects would be exhibited within the rehabilitated Panorama facility, all museum objects will continue to be stored at the park's state-of-the-art museum storage area at Headquarters. There will be no long-term impacts on museum objects as a result of the project.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:

There were no highly controversial effects identified during either preparation of the EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involves unique or unknown risks:

As disclosed in the “Environmental Consequences” section of the EA, the potential effects of the Selected Alternative are generally straightforward. Unique risks are not anticipated. Unknown risks are difficult to anticipate; however, detailed research and analysis of the Selected Alternative and its consequences places unknown risks at a minimal level.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts:

The Selected Alternative does not set a precedent for future NPS actions with potentially significant impacts or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. Future NPS actions will be evaluated through additional, project-specific planning processes that incorporate requirements of NEPA and NPS policies.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into smaller parts:

As described in the EA on pages 70 through 82, the Selected Alternative will more than negligibly affect soils, visitor use and experience, park operations, and health and safety. Although some resources will be adversely affected over the short-term during construction, the Selected Alternative will generally result in long-term, beneficial impacts. Also as described in the EA, a variety of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions have affected resources at and in the vicinity of the Panorama building. Although short-term, adverse impacts will contribute a negligible to minor component to adverse cumulative impacts, such impacts will not result in cumulatively significant adverse impacts. Rather, the Selected Alternative will contribute to long-term, moderate, beneficial cumulative impacts on human health and safety, park operations, and visitor use and experience at the park (see “Cumulative Impact” sections of the EA under “Environmental Consequences,” pages 70 through 82).

The degree to which the action may adversely affect items listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or other significant scientific, cultural or historic resource as indicated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:

As described on pages 18 through 21 of the EA, no cultural or historic resources listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP will be adversely affected. The area of the new administration building has been extensively surveyed for the presence of surface archeological and historic resources. There will be no potential to affect archaeological resources at the Panorama facility itself, due to the already disturbed nature of the site. Archaeological testing was conducted along the proposed water line corridor north and east of the Thornton Gap Entrance Station. The survey did not result in the discovery of any NRHP-eligible archaeological resources within the tested water line corridor, and no effects on archaeological resources will occur as a result of the Selected Alternative. A report documenting the results of the archaeological survey was submitted to the Virginia SHPO, and the SHPO concurred with the finding of No Adverse Effect on archeological resources, and that no further archaeological investigations are warranted in connection with the project as presently designed.

The existing Panorama facility and parking areas were constructed in the 1960s and are not eligible for inclusion into the NRHP because the Panorama facility is not 50 years old, does not fall within a special exception category (such as Mission 66) in which some historic structures younger than 50 years old may be eligible for the NRHP, and the facility postdates the period of significance for the Skyline Drive

Historic District (1931-1952). The NPS underwent consultation with the Virginia SHPO regarding the Panorama facility when the existing parking area at the facility was repaved during a Federal Highways Administration project in 1998. The Virginia SHPO concurred that there would be no impacts on known or unknown cultural resources at the site with a “No Effect” finding and that the building does not have architectural merit. In addition, there are no historic structures along the proposed water line corridor.

The entire length of Skyline Drive is listed on the NRHP as a cultural landscape, as being nationally significant for its relation to broad social movements, for its historic architecture, and landscape. The Panorama facility is not contributory to the cultural landscape of Skyline Drive, since it long post-dates the period of significance for the Drive (1931 to 1952). Therefore, rehabilitation of Panorama and construction of a new building addition onto this building would not affect any cultural landscapes. However, the area of the water line corridor does contribute to the cultural landscape of Skyline Drive. The existing non-historic water line corridor was constructed in the 1960s, and has been visible from Skyline Drive since its construction. It is approximately 10 to 12 feet wide, but is not dominant in the landscape and is not currently regularly maintained to the standard 20-foot width required for utility corridors. The proposed installation of a larger water line leading to the Panorama facility would require clearing of an additional approximately 10 feet of right-of-way corridor width for construction, up to a maximum width of 20 feet. This additional clearing would initially be more apparent in the landscape than the existing corridor, since the entire length of the corridor would be opened to 20 feet, resulting in a more defined line in the landscape. However, this impact would still be minor, since it would not diminish the overall integrity of Skyline Drive’s cultural landscape. The impact would be localized, with the views from Skyline Drive and U.S. 211, the Panorama parking area, and from higher elevations (looking in the direction of the corridor) being primarily affected. Over the long-term, the maintained corridor width would be a minimum of 12 feet to a maximum of 20 feet, depending on location. The section of the corridor from U.S. 211 to the administrative road would be maintained at 12 feet to reduce impacts on Skyline Drive’s cultural landscape, helping to preserve the integrity of the landscape. Where the corridor crosses Skyline Drive, vegetation would be allowed to grow in the corridor to reduce adverse impacts on the cultural landscape. This will reduce long-term adverse effects on the cultural landscape of Skyline Drive to a negligible level. Since the water line corridor is currently somewhat visible from Skyline Drive, impacts on the cultural landscape over the long-term from the Selected Alternative will not deviate much from existing conditions.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat as indicated under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act:

As described on pages 16 and 17 and in Appendix C of the EA, there are no federally or State-listed plant or animal species or critical habitat that would be affected by the project.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:

The Selected Alternative violates no Federal, State, or local environmental protection laws.

Consideration of Impairment Pursuant to National Park Service Policies

In addition to determining the environmental consequences of the preferred and other alternatives, NPS *Management Policies 2001* (December 27, 2000) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not actions would impair park resources. Policies clarifying terms pertaining to “impairment,” as well as a prohibition on impairment and what constitutes impairment, are found in *Management Policies 2001* (Sections 1.4.2 through 1.4.7).

The NPS determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will not constitute an impairment of Shenandoah National Park's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the EA, the agency and public comments received, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker in accordance with the NPS *Management Policies 2001*. As described in the EA, implementation of the Selected Alternative will not result in major, adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; (3) identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Scoping is the effort to involve agencies and the general public in determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the environmental document. Among other tasks, scoping determines important issues and eliminates issues not important; allocates assignments among the interdisciplinary team members and other participating agencies; identifies related projects and associated documents; identifies other permits, surveys, consultations required by other agencies; and creates a schedule which allows adequate time to prepare and distribute the environmental document for public review and comment before a final decision is made. Scoping includes any interested agency or any agency with jurisdiction by law or expertise (including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and Indian tribes) to obtain early input.

Scoping letters were mailed out describing the project and requesting public and agency input on issues to be addressed in the EA. In addition, a public notice was published in the *Rappahannock News* on September 25, 2003, and in the *Page News and Courier* on October 2, 2003. The same notice was posted on the Shenandoah National Park's website (<http://www.nps.gov/shen/>). The public scoping period for the project ended on October 20, 2003. A total of six comments were received from the public on the project during this period. All of these comments focused on the details of the types of facilities and services the commentors would like to see at Panorama. Five of the six comments are very positive and supportive. None of the comments pointed out significant environmental issues that need to be addressed. All comments were considered during the planning of this project.

No Native American tribes were consulted during the preparation of this EA because no tribes are known to be traditionally associated with the park. Archaeological surveys conducted within the area over the past 50 years have not uncovered any permanent Native American settlements, although hunter/gatherer parties used the area. In addition, there are no Indian trust resources in, near, or associated with the project area. The lands comprising the park are not held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior for the benefit of Indians due to their status as Indians.

The NPS underwent consultation with the Virginia SHPO regarding the Panorama facility when the existing parking area at the facility was repaved during a Federal Highways Administration project in 1998. The Virginia SHPO concurred that there would be no impacts on known or unknown cultural resources at the site with a "No Effect" finding and that the building does not have architectural merit. Archaeological testing was conducted along the proposed water line corridor north and east of the Panorama Entrance Station. A report documenting the results of the archaeological survey was submitted to the Virginia SHPO, and consultation and comment on the proposal were solicited from the SHPO. In a response letter dated March 3, 2004, the SHPO concurred with the finding of No Adverse Effect on archeological resources, and that no further archaeological investigations are warranted in connection with the project as presently designed.

The NPS initiated informal consultation with the USFWS in a letter dated September 10, 2003 regarding the presence of federally listed or candidate species or critical habitat within or near the project area, and the potential for such species or habitat to be impacted by the project. The USFWS responded on October 6, 2003 by providing updated species lists of federally threatened, endangered, and proposed species that may be present on or in the vicinity of Shenandoah National Park (Page and Rappahannock counties). In addition, the USFWS recommended the NPS consult with the two State agencies responsible for coordinating species lists on behalf of USFWS. At the request of the USFWS, the NPS consulted with the Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, and the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. In a letter dated October 10, 2003, the Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage stated that, while there are natural heritage resources known to occur within the project area, none would be adversely impacted by the project due to the scope of the activity and the distance to the resources. The letter also stated that the Selected Alternative would not affect any documented State-listed plants or insects, and that no State Natural Area Preserves under the Department's jurisdiction are located in the project area.

In a letter dated November 5, 2003, the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries responded that one federally listed species, the Shenandoah salamander (*Plethodon shenandoah*), has been documented in the vicinity of the project area, and that one State special concern species, the winter wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) has been documented in the area. According to Shenandoah National Park records, the nearest Shenandoah salamander habitat and associated individuals to the proposed project site are located approximately 2 miles south of the Panorama facility. Given the distance between these nearest populations and the project site, neither the Shenandoah salamander nor its habitat would be affected by the project. The winter wren does not have a legal designation, and as such, is not afforded special protection and does not require additional coordination.

The EA was made available for a 40-day public review and comment period ending on October 27, 2004. An electronic copy of the EA was placed on the park's website (www.nps.gov/shen). The NPS also sent copies of the EA to various local organizations, interested parties, and government agencies for their review and comment. Agencies and organizations to which the EA was sent included, but were not limited to, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Council on Indians, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. House of Representatives, Page and Rappahannock County Administrators, and many nearby community, neighborhood, and business associations. Also, the EA was made available for review at the Page and Rappahannock County Public Libraries, as well as at the Park Headquarters. Press releases were posted in the following newspapers on the specified dates: *Northern Virginia Daily* (September 28, 2004), *Page News and Courier* (September 29, 2004), and *Daily News Record* (October 2, 2004). One comment letter was received. This letter, from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, supported the finding that the project will not adversely impact natural heritage resources due to the scope of the activity and the distance from documented natural heritage resources. No other comments were received, and no NPS responses to comments are required.

This FONSI, attached to the public review EA, presents the NPS decision. The entire public review EA will not be reprinted.

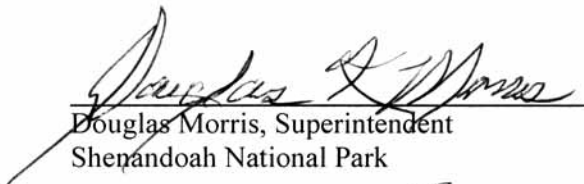
CONCLUSION

The Selected Alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the Selected Alternative will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are negligible to minor. There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic

Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. In addition, no highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence have been identified and implementing the Selected Alternative will not violate any Federal, State, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, the NPS has determined that the Selected Alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment, an EIS is not required for this project, and an EIS will not be prepared.

Recommended:


Douglas Morris, Superintendent
Shenandoah National Park

12/15/07
Date

Approved:


Marie Rust, Director
Northeast Region

12/30/07
Date